

NOW: MORE PAGES, HIGHER QUALITY, MORE EXPENSIVE

EIGHTBALL

No 16



DANIEL CLOWES CLOVES



IN THIS ISSUE:

Like a Weed, Joe
IMMORTAL, INVISIBLE
MCMXLVII
SQUAREL GIRL
and
CANDY-PANTS
•
Ghost World

**RECOMMENDED
FOR
MATURE
READERS**



SQUIRREL GIRL AND CANDY-PANTS

by DANIEL CLOWES

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OUR
TWO-FOR-ONE DEAL, LADIES!

GIVE
ME THAT!

EWW! HIS
COSTUME IS
TOTALLY
FILTHY!
WHO WOULD
EAT HIS
FILTHY
CHICKEN!?

SLOW DOWN, BITCH!
HURRY
UP, 'MO!'
HEY LOOK!

GOD! IT'S
TOTALLY EASY!

TRIVIA
QUESTIONS
FOR A FREE CUP
OF COFFEE:
WHO WAS
SUPERMAN'S
DOG?

THE ANSWER
IS SNOOPY!

NOPE,
SORRY...

IS IT
BISCUIT?

NOPE...

EGGNOG!

KIRBY PRO.

I GROUNTY!

WOW!

WE HAVE TO
STALK HIM!

WHAT'S HIS NAME?

"FELDMAN".

LATER...

THIS IS
THAT SHOW!

YOU, WITH
YOUR PERSONAL
COMPUTER, HAVE
PLAYED RIGHT INTO
THE HANDS OF
THE OPPRESSOR!

I GROW UP
AROUND URBAN INTEL-
LECTUALS, MARXISTS,
FRIENDS, THAT TYPE. I'M
EVEN HALF-JEWISH. TO THIS
DAY I'M REALLY ONLY COM-
FORTABLE CROWDED IN
AMONG THE OTHER DECAYING
COSMOPOLITANS, AND I
WAS PROBABLY EVEN
WORSE BACK THEN (I
WAS AROUND THIR-
TEEN OR 40).



RODGER YOUNG
IN

Like a Weed, Joe



THIS WAS THE YEAR I
GOT STUCK FOR THE
WHOLE SUMMER WITH MY
GRANDPARENTS (STUCK IS
TOO STRONG; THEY WERE
NICE) IN THE MIDDLE OF
NOWHERE ...

BY DAVID CLOUTIER

THE COTTAGE WAS RIGHT ON THE LAKE,
BORDERED BY AN ABANDONED ARMY
BASE AND A ROW OF UNPINTED BUNGALOWS.
THANK GOD THERE WAS A TV
SET OR I WOULD HAVE SERIOUSLY
GONE NUTS!

I DON'T SEE
HOW YOU CAN TELL
WHAT THEY'RE DOING!



YOU WON'T BELIEVE THIS, BUT MY
MAIN ACTIVITY WAS THROWING A
TENNIS BALL AT AN OLD BRICK SHED
FOR HOURS AT A TIME— PROBABLY
FOUR OR FIVE HOURS A DAY!



I HAD THIS FANTASY WHERE I
WOULD STRIKE OUT THE LAST BATTER
TO WIN THE WORLD SERIES. MY E.R.A.,
THE ANNOUNCERS WOULD POINT OUT,
WAS A SPARKLING 0.80 FOR THE
SEASON. NOT BAD, EH?



I T WAS EASY TO BELIEVE MY OWN DELUSIONS THERE WERE ONLY TWO FRAGILE (AND ENTHUSIASTICALLY INDULGENT) OLD PEOPLE AROUND TO JUDGE ME - AT TIMES I FELT NEARLY SUPER-HUMAN...



I KNOW THEY SAY YOUR PSYCHOLOGICAL PROGRAMMING IS SET BY AGE SEVEN, BUT I REALLY FEEL LIKE THAT SUMMER WAS A TURNING POINT IN TERMS OF MY BECOMING "WITHDRAWN" AND "PASSIVE" (TWO FAVORITE WORDS OF MY SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST)...



BEYOND THAT, OF COURSE, THEIR INTENSE, DESPERATE LOVE WAS STIFLING AND UNCOMFORTABLE...



INCIDENTALLY, THIS WAS ALSO THE SUMMER I BECAME A MAN, AT LEAST AS FAR AS MY POTENTIAL FOR REPRODUCTION GOES...



WHEN THE CHRIST FAMILY (I'M NOT MAKING THAT UP) RENTED THE PINK COTTAGE (WHICH WAS GRAY) IT WAS AROMATIC, THRILLING EVENT. MY HEART PRACTICALLY STOPPED WHEN, AFTER THE FATHER AND MOTHER, A TEENAGE DAUGHTER EMERGED FROM THE BAGGAGE. I SAT WATCHING THEM, FLOATING ININIBLY (OR SO I FIGURED) AS THEY SAT THERE FOR HOURS NOT MOVING.



A FEW NIGHTS LATER I "TOOK A WALK" AND WOUND UP WATCHING HER PLAY CARDS WITH THE FOLKS. I KEPT EXPECTING SOMETHING TO HAPPEN BUT IT NEVER DID. IT'S WEIRD HOW SOMETHING LIKE THAT - SO MUNDANE - CAN GIVE YOU A BONER.



THIS NEXT DAY, MY GRANDPARENTS TOOK ME TO A PUPPET SHOW IN A NEARBY HICK TOWN. THEY WERE SO HAPPY TO BE DOING THIS FOR ME. I DIDN'T HAVE THE HEART TO POINT OUT THAT, AS ALWAYS, I WAS THE OLDEST KID THERE BY A MILE ... THE THING IS, THOUGH, I GOTTA DIG IT...



MY GRANDFATHER WAS A CONSTANT SOURCE OF EMBARRASSMENT. HE COULD NOT COMPREHEND THE INANE MECHANICS OF MODERN CULTURE -- A BLESSING THAT I NOW ADMIRE AND LOOK TO FOR INSPIRATION.



ON THE WAY DOWN I HAPPENED UPON HER BIKINI - AT FIRST I FELT LIKE I'D HIT THE JACKPOT, BUT QUICKLY DECIDED I'D BETTER NOT TOUCH IT (FINGER-PRINTS, BLOODHOUNDS, ETC.). IT SMELLED LIKE WET SAND AND SEAMWEED, WITHOUT ANY HINT OF BRUSHNESS.



AFTERWARDS, MY GRANDFATHER, WHO WAS PRETTY FAR GONE AT THIS POINT, TRIED, IN THE SPIRIT OF NEIGHBORLINES, TO TELL AN "EARTHY" STORY (ANDE HIS FORTÉ) TO SOME TOUCHY LUTHERANS...



OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS I BECAME MORE, YOU MIGHT SAY, OBSESSIVE. I MEMORIZED HER SCHEDULE (12:30 - 6:45H, NO APPEARANCES ON THURSDAY) AND DIVIDED MY TIME BETWEEN SITTING AS THOUGH IN DEEP CONTEMPLATION AND SPYING FROM THE BHAGUES.



DURING THE OFF-PeAK HOURS I STUCK TO MY OLD HABITS, THOUGH MY FANTASIES WERE INCREASINGLY REPLACED BY UNREALISTIC REHEARSALS FOR THE COMING SCHOOL YEAR...

DID I TELL YOU GUYS ABOUT THE CHICK I BOUGHT AT THE BEACH LAST SUMMER?



ON THE FOURTH OF JULY, MY GRANDPARENTS ARRANGED FOR ME TO MAKE FRIENDS WITH BEEMIS - A MOODY AND SINISTER LOCAL BOY (SON OF A MAN THEY BOUGHT ORGANIZERS FROM) WHO WAS TWO YEARS OLDER THAN ME...

AT NIGHT I WAS OFTEN OVERCOME WITH A PRIMAL AND THRILLING ROMANTIC DESPAIR... UNFORTUNATELY, WHAT HAD SEEMED LIKE AN EXPRESSION OF UNFILTERED EMOTION WAS ALWAYS REVEALED AS TRITE AND POINTLESS IN THE DAYLIGHT.



WITH NO ADULTS AROUND HE WAS MORE TALKATIVE - EVERY WORD GAVE NOTICE TO THE PRESENCE OF DEEP, UNFIXABLE TROUBLE...



I WAS SCARED TO DEATH OF HIM, BUT I GUESS I ALSO SORT OF RELATED TO HIS ALIENATION... YOU KNOW HOW IT IS...



IN NO TIME AT ALL I HAD ADOPTED HIS NARROW, DETACHED VOCABULARY AND TAKEN IT, WITH SHOCKINGLY LITTLE EFFORT, TO A NEW LEVEL-- I GUESS IT'S PRETTY CLEAR THAT I'VE GOT MY OWN PROBLEMS...



IT THINK IF I COULD ERASE ONE THING FROM MY LIFE THAT WOULD BE IT-- THE 'OLD FOGGIE' THING-- EVEN AT THE TIME I ALMOST TOOK IT BACK...



IWENT UPSTAIRS IMMEDIATELY AND AVOIDED THE BEACH FOR THE REST OF THE WEEK. HAD THE CHRISTMAS DAUGHTER WRITTEN BACK? OR MAYBE IT WAS A WARNING FROM HER DAD...



IN MY FANTASIES I WAS, FOR SOME REASON, NO LONGER PLAYING A REGULAR BASEBALL GAME. NOW I HAD TO STRIKE OUT A SERIES OF MONSTERS FROM OTHER PLANETS (?) WHILE THE FATE OF THE EARTH HUNG IN THE BALANCE...



AT NIGHT THESE PROFOUND SCENARIOS INEVITABLY FACED, TOO OFTEN SWING WAY TO THE RESTLESS FEVER OF ROMANTIC DELUSION ...



BUT ONCE THE SHOW BEGAN, I WAS MESMERIZED BY ITS THREADARE EARNESTNESS, THE BEAUTIFUL TRAGEDY OF THE WHOLE THING. I COULD BARELY CONTAIN MY INTENSE FEELINGS OF LOVE AND GOODWILL FOR EVERY PERFORMER.



THE NEXT DAY, BEAMIS AND I WERE TAKEN TO THE CIRCUS. THEY CALLED IT THE BARNUM BROS. BIG-TOP, IF YOU CAN BELIEVE THAT. THE WHOLE THING FELT LIKE A SCAM, THOUGH FROM THE LOOKS OF THINGS NOT A VERY EFFECTIVE ONE ...



FOR A SECOND I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO BURST INTO TEARS. THAT'S REAL ART, MY FRIENDS ... I WANTED TO CHEER LOUDER THAN ANYONE THERE, BUT I WAS AFRAID IT WOULD COME OUT SOUNDING INSINCERE ...



THE WHOLE TIME I WENT WAITING FOR BEAMIS TO SAY SOMETHING. WHENEVER THE JUGGLER DROPPED A BALL I CRINCHED, EXPECTING A WHITESPACE. I WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO STAND IT, I DON'T THINK. FORTUNATELY, THERE WAS ONLY ONE SMALL EXCHANGE.



THAT NIGHT HE STAYED OVER AT OUR PLACE. MY GRANDPARENTS HATED HIM, I COULD TELL, AND CERTAINLY THERE WAS NO GOOD REASON NOT TO.



HE WAS A CREEP, PLAIN AND SIMPLE, BUT HE NEVER PRETENDED OTHERWISE - BEING A CREEP GIVES YOU A LOT OF FREEDOM AT THAT AGE.



IT WAS THE CLOSEST I EVER GOT TO THE GIRL. I COULD SWEAR SHE WAS LOOKING RIGHT AT ME... EVEN THOUGH SHE WAS WITH HER PARENTS, BEAVIS WAS CONVINCED THAT IF WE WAITED LONG ENOUGH SHE WOULD TAKE OFF HER CLOTHES.



ME TRIED TO EXPLAIN TO ME WHAT HE THOUGHT IT SAID BUT I COULDN'T FOLLOW HIM. AFTER A LONG, SILENT DELIBERATION HE CAREFULLY SPELLED OUT HIS RESPONSE.



THAT NIGHT THE CHRIST'S WERE HAVING ONE OF THEIR BONGRIES. BEAVIS AND I INSTINCTIVELY TOOK TO THE BUSHES, SKULKING THROUGH BRAMBLES AND POISON OAK TO AFFORD OURSELVES A BETTER LOOK...



ITHE NEXT DAY, THURSDAY, THERE WAS ANOTHER MESSAGE ON THE BEACH. WE MUST HAVE WALKED OVER IT THE NIGHT BEFORE BECAUSE AGAIN I COULDN'T MAKE IT OUT...



WE SAT UNTIL LUNCHTIME, WAITING TO SEE WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN...



BEMIS GOT ALL WORKED UP TALKING ABOUT HOW HE LIKED TO GO HUNTING WITH HIS "TWELVE GAUGE" AND BLOW AWAY SQUIRRELS AND STUFF. HE BEGAN THROWING ROCKS AT SEAGULLS. HE THREW LIKE A GIRL AND I FELT THANKFUL THAT AT LEAST MY OLD MAN HAD TAUGHT ME THAT MUCH . . .



I JUST STOOD THERE FOR A TERRIBLE MOMENT BEFORE BEMIS FINISHED HIM OFF. I GUESS IT WAS AN ACT OF COMPASSION ON HIS PART, AS UNLIKELY AS THAT SEEKS.



JUST AS HE WAS ABOUT TO GET INTO HIS FATHER'S CAR, BEMIS REACHED INTO HIS POCKET AND, LIKE A MAGICIAN, PULLED OUT A PAIR OF STOLEN BIKINI PANTIES (OR WHATEVER THEY'RE CALLED).



I FIGURED HERE'S MY CHANCE TO SHOW HIM UP. I HONESTLY DIDN'T EVEN THINK ABOUT WHAT I WAS DOING UNTIL MY THIRD SHOT CONNECTED.



LATER, HE WANTED TO GO BY THE CHRIST-GIRL'S BEACH HOUSE AND SNOOP AROUND. THIS MADE ME NERVOUS SO I STAYED ON THE BEACH. AFTER A WHILE HE CAME DOWN AND WE WALKED BACK TO MY GRANDPARENTS' HOUSE WITHOUT A WORD.



AFTER DARK I SET OUT TO ERASE BEMIS' ENIGMATIC INSCRIPTION AND TO SOMEHOW ALTER THE CRIME SCENE SO AS TO DIVERT SUSPICION AWAY FROM MYSELF, BUT MY GRANDFATHER STOOD IN THE WAY.



AT THE TIME I REALLY COULDN'T SEE WHAT WAS THE BIG DEAL ABOUT THE MOON AND THE STARS, BUT THE OLD MAN GOT SO CHAMPED UP OVER IT ALL THAT I DECIDED I DIDN'T DARE RISK DISAPPOINTING HIM BY CARRYING OUT MY LITTLE PLAN...



LATER THAT AFTERNOON SHE LEFT FOR GOOD. UNLIKE MOST RENTERS, THE CHRISTYS WERE IMMATERIAL AND LEFT NO SIGN WHATSOEVER THAT THEY HAD BEEN THERE.



I SAW A LOT OF BEINGS UNTIL HE GOT A JOB AT THE CANNERY TO PAY FOR SOME FANCY DIRTY BIKE THAT HE WOULDN'T SHUT UP ABOUT, BUT THAT'S ANOTHER STORY.



THE NEXT MORNING THERE WAS ANOTHER MESSAGE ON THE BEACH. IT COULD'VE BEEN THERE VERY LONG BUT IT HAD BEEN TRAMPLED AND WINDBLOWN LIKE THE OTHERS AND WAS JUST AS IMPOSSIBLE TO READ...



I WAS ABLE TO DULL THE PAIN OF NEVER EVEN KNOWING HER FIRST NAME BY FALLING BACK INTO MY OLD HABITS. YEARS LATER I NAMED HER KATHY AND WAS ABLE TO CONVINCE MYSELF AND OTHERS THAT SHE WAS THE FIRST GIRL I EVER KISSED.



AT THE END OF THE SUMMER IT WAS DECIDED THAT I SHOULD KEEP ON LIVING WITH MY GRANDPARENTS. WE MOVED BACK TO THE CITY (MY GRANDFATHER NEEDED SURGERY) AND I WENT TO A NEW SCHOOL WHERE I STRUGGLED TO BE THOUGHT OF AS SOMEONE WHO HOUSED A VITAL AND COMPLICATED INNER WORLD.



WHAT AM I, A PSYCHIATRIST?

THE THOUGHT OF YOU ACTUALLY CUTTING OUT A PIECE OF ZIPATONE TO APPLY ON PAGE 4, PANEL #10 OF EIGHTBALL #16 MAKES ME GO INTO A LAUGHING FIT. HOW EXACTLY DO YOU DO ABOUT CHOOSING A TONE FOR "SNATCH" AND DID YOU GET AN ERECTION WHILE APPLYING SAID TINY PIECE OF TONE TO THE PAGE? YOU'RE SICK... NO ONE LIKES YOU.

CHAD LINDHOLM
NO ADDRESS GIVEN

"CARICATURE" WAS GREAT AND ALL BUT, SPEAKING AS ONE WHO'S DONE TIME AS A CARTOONIST, I'M AFRAID YOU'RE ROMANTICIZING THE PROFESSION A LITTLE. WHERE ARE THE DRUNKEN, ABUSIVE CUSTOMERS, THE TEENAGE HOODLUMS, THE ENDLESS PARADE OF COMEDIANS WHO STAND BEHIND YOU AND SAY "I DIDN'T KNOW SHE HAD A Moustache." ?

ANDY HARTZELL
LAS VEGAS, NV.

I HAVE A QUESTION THAT I WOULD LIKE ANSWERED. WHY DON'T YOU RESPOND TO PEOPLE'S INQUIRIES ON

YOUR LETTERS PAGE?
SCOTT STARNER
GREENSBURG, PA

...WHY DOES EIGHTBALL COME OUT SO RARELY? WHY CAN'T YOU MANAGE TO WORK FASTER? AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE A PROFESSIONAL?

PHILLIP LENNSEN
AACHEN,
GERMANY

...I DRAW CARTOON FEATURES IN LONG BEACH ONE SUMMER. ONE LADY ASKED ME TO DRAW HER WHOLE FAMILY. THE THING IS, THEY WEREN'T EVEN THERE SO SHE JUST DESCRIBED THEM ALL TO ME. WHEN I FINISHED, SHE SAID IT LOOKED JUST LIKE THEM AND THEY WOULDN'T REMEMBER IF THEY POSED FOR IT.

ANTHONY RUDOLICH
PASADENA, CA

SEVERAL MONTHS AGO I WROTE TO YOU FOR

MOVING TO BERKELEY. WHILE IT SEEMS YOU'RE CONTENT TO CONTINUE LIVING AMONG BIRKENSTOCK-WEARING, CARLOS CASTANEDA-READING, ESPRESSO-SLURPING MINIONS OF THE EAST BAY, OUR WORLD HASTHIAN FULLY REMAINED UNAFFECTED BY THE WORLD-DRIVING, SWEET HONEY AND THE ROSE-LISTEN-

ING, INCENSE-BURNING PEOPLE YOU NOW CALL YOUR INSIGHT-BORS.

REX ODEME
BROOKLYN, NY

...I'M A PRO CARTOONIST WHO SPENDS 10-12 MONTHS A YEAR TRAVELING ALL OVER, WORKING FAIRS, FESTIVALS, MALLS AND SLIMY BARS DURING MY PITIFUL TRADE. I WAS DEEPLY MOVED BY YOUR STORY "CARICATURE".

THE WHOLE EPISODE WAS DISTURBINGLY FAMILIAR, ECHOING MY OWN PATHETIC ENTHUSIASM PANDERING TO THE LOWEST COMMON DENOMINATOR (AND YES, THE PART ABOUT THE BAND-AIDS IS TRUE, ALTHOUGH I'VE NEVER BEEN ON A CARTOONIST.)

SAM KERKAWIECK
DENVER, CO

...IN EIGHTBALL #16 IN THE "FELDMAN" STRIP, YOU FORGOT TO WRITE THE ADDRESS ON THE BLACKBOARD TWO TIMES. I THINK YOU SHOULD CORRECT IT AND REPRINT THE ISSUE. IT SEEMS SO UNPROFESSIONAL. ALSO, I'M THE GUY WHO SENT YOU THE PICTURES OF THE TATTOOED YOUR FRIENDS THEY'RE PICKED-UP AND STUPID -- IT'S REAL! IT CAUSED ME A LOT OF PAIN. IT WASN'T NO MAGIC MARKERS!

JONATHAN HENGSTMAN
NEW YORK, NY

WRITE:
EIGHTBALL
2140 SHATTUCK AVE
SUITE 2107
BERKELEY
CALIFORNIA
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- ADVERTISEMENT -

HOST WORLD



MCMXLVI

DANIEL CLOWES

I'M OBSESSED WITH THE YEAR 1966...



FOR ONE THING, THAT WAS THE YEAR I WAS BORN BUT ALSO I THINK IT REPRESENTS THE PEAK OF AMERICAN CULTURE...



AFTER THAT, WHAT HAVE WE GOT? EVERYTHING WENT STRAIGHT DOWN THE FUCKIN' TOILET!

AS YOU CAN SEE, MY PLACE IS LIKE A SHITTY TOP THE GOLDEN AGE... A FEW YEARS AGO I WENT ON A ROAD TRIP WITH MY OLD GIRLFRIEND GOING TO FLEA MARKETS AND STUFF...

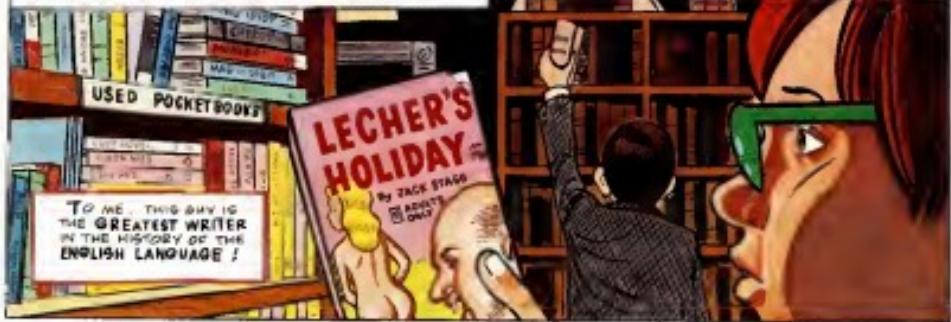


IF YOU EVER THINK ABOUT DOING THAT, DON'T BOTHER—THERE'S NOTHING LEFT OUT THERE. GAY ANTIQUE DEALERS GOT EVERYTHING.



I BROKE UP WITH HER PRETTY SOON AFTER THAT. I REALLY COULD NOT BELIEVE SOME OF THE STUPID SHIT SHE WAS BUYING...

ONE OTHER REASON FOR THE TRIP WAS TO TRY TO TRACK DOWN THIS GUY WHO USED TO WRITE SEX NOVELS IN THE EARLY '60'S ... JACK STEINBLATT



"LOVE IS FOR CLOUDS," SAID THE GURU. HER THICK BREASTS ROLLED FORWARD, LIPS PARTING, HAIR CASCADING ... SUDDENLY THUD! MY BRAIN TOTTERED LIKE A JINKY BOARD IN A WINDSTORM AND I ... WHEN I CAME TO, MY FACE WAS PINNED TO THE PAVEMENT BY A FAMILIAR CHANDELIER HEEL. I'D BEEN PLAYED LIKE A TWO-DOLLAR SONGPHONE! 'BRECO!' I SHRIEKED ..."

"IT'S LIKE POETRY! I MEAN, WHAT THE FUCK IS A JINKY BOARD IF--SO WE GOT TO MEET HIM. HE SHOWED US THIS STUFF HE WROTE IN THE LATE '70'S THAT WAS BASICALLY CHILD PORNOGRAPHY--INDECENT AND STUFF--AND MY OLD GIRLFRIEND PICKED THAT MOMENT TO SUDDENLY START GETTING OFFENDED BY ALL THESE SEX BOOKS THAT SHE'S SEEN A MILLION TIMES BEFORE..."



I LIKE TO EAT THICK STEAKS, SMOKE CIGARS AND DRINK BEER... IF SHE DIDN'T LIKE THAT STUFF, FINE. BUT WHAT BUSINESS IS IT OF HERS IF I WANT TO ENJOY MY LIFE?!



ANYWAY, MY PRESENT GIRLFRIEND IS MUCH COOLER--ALMOST PERFECT, EXCEPT SHE'S INTO THIS NEW STAR TREK SHIT--I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT IT'S CALLED--AND SOMETIMES HER TASTE IN MUSIC IS A LITTLE QUESTIONABLE: SHE SAYS SHE LIKES SHIT LIKE DURAN DURAN--BECAUSE IT'S "FUNNY"--TO ME THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING FUNNY ABOUT THAT CRAP!



YOU PROBABLY NOTICED ALL MY BATMAN STUFF... ADAM WEST IS MY HERO... HOW ANYONE IN THEIR RIGHT MIND COULD PREFER THAT MODERN BATMAN -- THAT PLASTIC-NIPPLE HIGH-TECH S+M BULLSHIT TO THE REAL BATMAN IS BEYOND ME!



ONE DAY, TOTALLY OUT OF THE BLUE, MY MOM TELLS ME THAT BABY HAS FINALLY GOTTEN A JOB. SHE SAID IT LIKE THIS WAS NO BIG DEAL AT ALL.



I COULD NOT FUCKING BELIEVE IT! THEN I FIND OUT THAT HE'S GOING TO BE IN THIS SHOW DOWNTOWN CALLED 'SUPERSTARS' WHERE IT'S ALL GUYS IMPERSONATING HAVING BEEN FEMALE STARS LIKE JOAN RIVERS, ETC.



MY OLD GIRLFRIEND MADE ME DO AND IT WAS THE MOST GRUELING NIGHT OF MY FUCKING LIFE! TO THIS DAY HE HAS NEVER ONCE MENTIONED ANYTHING ABOUT A BOYFRIEND AND IT STILL HAUNTS DAMNED ON MY MOM THAT HE MIGHT POSSIBLY BE GAY! SHE EVEN HELPS HIM PRACTICE HIS ROUTINES!



GET THIS! A WEEK BEFORE I WAS BORN, MY PARENTS WENT TO VEGAS AND SAW SAMMY AND DING AT THE SANDS - CAN YOU IMAGINE THAT? NOWADAYS YOU'D HAVE TO PAY A HUNDRED BUCKS A TICKET TO SEE GIGI GRIFTER AND EVERYONE ROY! PEOPLE ARE SUCH IDIOTS!



BEFORE HE GOT REMARRIED, MY DAD USED TO BE A PRETTY COOL GUY - IN HIS POST-MOM DAYS, HE USED TO HANG OUT AT THIS AMAZING STRIP joint, **DIAMOND JIM'S**, WHERE ALL THESE GREAT OLD JEWISH COMEDIANS WOULD INTRODUCE THE GIRLS.



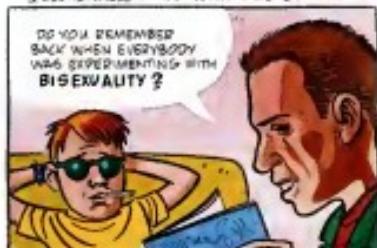
I WENT THERE ONCE WITH MY FRIEND TODD. NOW IT'S CALLED **HARDBODIES** AND IT'S A TOTAL PARKING BO'S ABOMINATION! IT'S LIKE THESE VICTORIA SECRET CHICKS DOING A **GYNECOLOGY EXHIBIT** SET TO **BAD DISCO MUSIC**. THEY'RE NOT EVEN ALLOWED TO SERVE ALCOHOL!



THIS GUY TODD USED TO BE THE ONLY DECENT HUMAN BEING I KNEW UNTIL HE WORKED UP WITH MY PACTH' EX! AT FIRST I WAS LIKE "OKAY, OKAY, THAT'S COOL, WE CAN STILL BE FRIENDS," BUT THEN HE STARTS ACTING LIKE SOME FUCKING LIBERAL -- ALWAYS SHAKING HIS HEAD WHEN I SAID SOMETHING THAT DIDN'T FIT HIS IDEA OF HOW THINGS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE ...



AND THEN I STARTED TO THINK ABOUT SHUFF HE HAD TOLD ME - LIKE ONCE HE TOLD ME THAT WHEN HE WAS A KID HE WAS INTO THE **BEENIE MAN**! TO ME THAT'S TOTALLY INCREDIBLE! I OVERLOOKED A LOT OF QUESTIONABLE STUFF WITH THIS GUY...



DO YOU REMEMBER BACK WHEN EVERYBODY WAS EXPERIMENTING WITH **BISEXUALITY**?

WORSE THAN THAT WAS HIS EGOMANIA WAY OF MAKING EVERYTHING THAT WAS COOL SEEM REALLY ANNOYING BY OVER-ANALYZING IT TO DEATH...



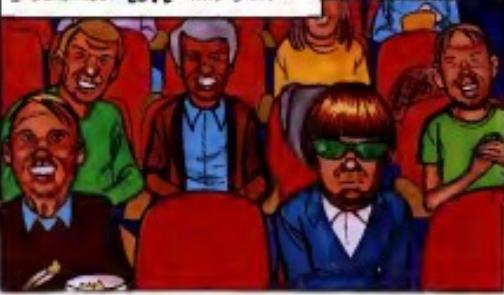
HOW CAN YOU SAY YOU DON'T LIKE RAP? IT'S MADE UP OF THE SAME ELEMENTS AS BARBIE PUNK WITHOUT THE STRUCTURAL LIMITATIONS IMPOSED BY IT.

ANYWAY, FUCK HIM.

I DON'T NEED TO HANG OUT WITH ANYBODY ANYWAY, I'VE GOT A FUCKIN' GIRLFRIEND--- LATELY WE'VE REALLY BEEN GETTING INTO RENTING MOVIES--- GRADE Z HORROR AND CRIME STUFF--



I USED TO LIKE TO GO TO SEE THESE MOVIES IN THE THEATER, BUT I GOT SICK OF ALL THE FUCKING ASSHOLES IN THE AUDIENCE WHO WOULD LAUGH AT EVERYTHING I GENUINELY LOVE THIS STUFF.



I USED TO BE YOU COULD WALK AROUND THE CITY AND ONCE OR TWICE A YEAR YOU'D STUMBLE ON A VIEW THAT WAS EXACTLY AS IT WAS IN LIKE 1950---LIKE THE PERFECT BACKDROP FOR ONE OF THESE MOVIES--



ONCE IN A WHILE WE'D GO TO THIS OLD BAR CALLED THE OWL... IT'S ALL OLD REGULARS--- NOBODY GOES THERE , BUT IT'S PRETTY AUTHENTIC--- THERE'S THIS INCREDIBLE CLOCK -- SOMETIMES YOU CAN JUST FOR A SECOND IMAGINE THAT YOU'RE ROBERT MITCHUM IN LIKE 1960 , BUT THEN SOME DUCHEBAG IN A DAYGLO JAMPSUIT WILL WALK IN AND SPoil EVERYTHING !



SOMETIMES I HATE EVERYONE SO MUCH I CAN HARDLY STAND IT! THERE WERE MORE GREAT SONGS RECORDED IN THE SUMMER OF 1966 BY BANDS THAT NOBODY HAS EVER HEARD OF, THAN IN ALL THE YEARS SINCE!



ALL THAT SHIT THAT CAME AFTER THAT, ALL THAT HIPPIE GARBAGE. THAT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE AN EXPRESSION OF FREE DOM--FREEBOM FOR WHO? YOU CAN'T SMOKE OR DRINK OR EVEN ORDER A FUCKIN' HAMBURGER ACCORDING TO THESE PEOPLE!



WHAT DO THEY THINK? THEY'RE GONNA FUCKIN' LIVE FOREVER?

WHAT REALLY GETS ME IS THAT THEY THINK THEY HAVE ME ALL FIGURED OUT--LIKE I'M SOME DORK WHO'S INTO 'NOSTALGIA' OR 'BEATLEMANIA' ... FUCK, I HATE THE BEATLES!



... OR THEY THINK IT'S SOME FUCKIN' 'FASHION REVIVAL'--I HATE FASHION BULLSHIT EVEN MORE!

THAT'S ALL IT WAS WITH THAT OLD GIRLFRIEND--1966 WAS A PHASE FOR HER! SHE'S PROBABLY RELIVING THE GLORY DAYS OF 1982. BY NOW! THAT'S WHY THAT WRITER JACK STEINBLATT IS SO COOL. HE'S TOTALLY OBVIOUS TO THE CHANGING TIMES. REALITY IS WHATEVER YOU WANT IT TO BE, RIGHT?

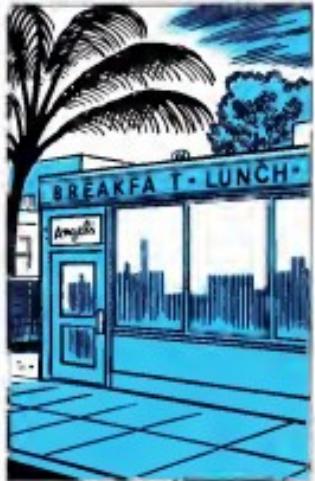


YOU'VE GOT TO BE ABLE TO GO IN YOUR OWN DIRECTION OR YOU JUST GET TRAMPLED BY THE FLOW OF HISTORY...



THE REAL STORY BEGINS ON THE FIRST DAY OF 1967. SUBURBAN BARBECUE GUESTS DRIVE HOME STILL HOLDING MARTINI GLASSES--SWINGER'S CLUB (OR FREDDY) AS TEENAGE GIRLS SING ALONG TO CHEAP RECORD PLAYERS. FATHERS LECTURE ("THAT AND-GODDAMN HOGGUM!") AS THE GINGERBOMB CONTINUES, LONG AND OUT-OF-TIME--THE RECORD PLAYS OVER AND OVER, VOLUME INCREASING.

END











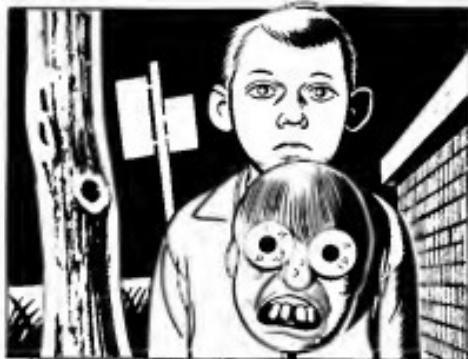


IMMORTAL, INVISIBLE



IT WAS HALLOWEEN NIGHT AND EVEN THOUGH I WAS NEARLY FOURTEEN, I DECIDED TO GO TRICK-OR-TREATING - NOT THAT I WAS CANDY-OBSSESSED OR ANYTHING. IT WAS SORT OF A SPIRITUAL THING (I THINK THAT'S THE WORD I WANT TO USE). AT FIRST I DIDN'T REALLY WANT TO GO, BUT A STRANGE, ADOLESCENT MOOD CAME OVER ME AND SOON I COULD NO LONGER ALLOW MYSELF TO SQUANDER THIS ONE LAST OPPORTUNITY ...

I DECIDED TO MAKE IT INTO SOMETHING MORE THAN IT WAS. AT FIRST I HAD SOME PRE-VENTIOUS IDEA ABOUT LOOKING AT THE WORLD FROM BEHIND THE SAFETY OF A MASK OR SOMETHING. BUT IT GOT ALL MISTED UP WITH CONDENSATION AND I HAD TROUBLE BREATHING AFTER A WHILE...



THE HOUSE THEY WERE GOING TO WAS SO OBVIOUS. "I AM NOT INTERESTED IN THAT TYPE OF HOUSE," I TOLD MYSELF...



I FELT A SURGE OF EXCITEMENT WITH EACH DOORBELL RING, THOUGH IT'S HARD NOT TO BE DISAPPOINTED WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR. IN MANY WAYS, I THOUGHT, THE PERFECT NIGHT WOULD BE A STRING OF UNANSWERED DOORS.



AS SOON AS I TOOK IT OFF I STARTED TO RUN INTO JUST THE SORT OF PEOPLE I HAD BEEN LOOKING TO AVOID -- NEIGHBORS, OTHER CHILDREN, ETC...



THE HOUSES I CHOSE WERE DETERMINED ONLY BY INSTINCT - EXHILARATING ADOLESCENT INSTINCT THAT ALLOWS A TEENAGER TO FOOL HIMSELF COMPLETELY INTO THINKING THAT HIS RANDOM THOUGHTS AND ACTS HAVE EXALTED MEANING...



MOSTLY I HOPED FOR OLD PEOPLE . THEY SEEMED MORE SPIRITUAL (I GUESS BECAUSE THEY HAVE TO BE) ... OR MAYBE A BEHUAGED OLDER CHINESE MAN WHO WOULD SAY SOMETHING ENIGMATIC... OR A CRAZY IRISH WOMAN ...



BEFORE I GO ON I SHOULD EXPLAIN THAT I USED TO MAKE EVERYBODY CALL ME "CAR-MICHAEL" BACK THEN BECAUSE I HATED MY FIRST NAME ...

TRICK OR TREAT!



HEY, I KNOW YOU! YOU'RE A POMMERDY! I USED TO GO TO DAY CAMP WITH PAT!



THE POMMERDYS WERE AN IMMENSE IN-DISTINCT CLAN (MOSTLY BOYS) OF GOOD-NATURED OVER-ACHIEVERS WHO SHARED WITH THE CAR-MICHAELS (I.E. ME) ONLY THEIR SHORTNESS AND ALL AROUND UNREMARKABLE LOOKS.



KIDS LOVE THE CREAMY GOODNESS OF PEANUT BUTTER!



THE BEST NEWS I'VE HEARD RECENTLY IS THAT MR. POMMERDY LEFT HIS WIFE FOR A YOUNGER WOMAN, THROWING THE FAMILY INTO TURMOIL.



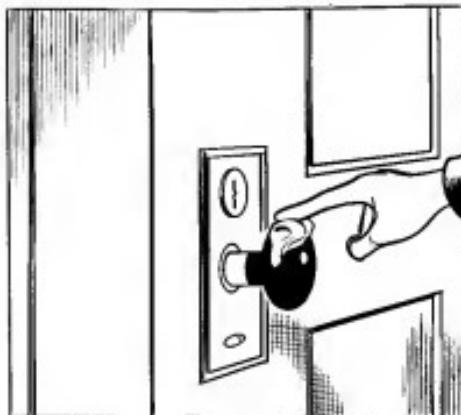
I WAS GETTING LATE AND THE STREETS WERE PRACTICALLY DESERTED. THE FEW SAD PIECES OF CANDY I HAD WERE STUCK IN A CLUMP TO THE PEANUT BUTTER. I WAS LESS THAN A MILE FROM MY HOUSE BUT I HAD NEVER BEEN ON THIS STREET IN MY LIFE, I DON'T THINK.



I WAS OBVIOUS THAT NO ONE WAS HOME BUT I KEPT KNOCKING ANYWAY. I KNOCKED ONE HUNDRED TIMES. I FELT GUILTY FOR GIVING UP TOO QUICKLY ON SOME OF THE OTHER HOUSES.



I DON'T KNOW WHY BUT THIS REALLY PISSED ME OFF! I WENT BACK AND WIPE THE PEANUT BUTTER ON HER DOORKNOB.



IT WASN'T EASY FOR SOMEONE LIKE ME TO KEEP KNOCKING ON PEOPLE'S DOORS. IT WAS SORT OF THRILLING BUT THERE WAS NO PAY-OFF AND I WAS STARTING TO FEEL FRUSTRATED AND DISENCHANTED...



AS I WAS LEAVING I LOOKED BACK. THERE WAS AN OLD LADY IN THE DARK LOOKING AT ME FROM BEHIND THE CURTAIN...



THEN I WALKED AROUND FOR AWHILE, PLAYING OVER IN MY HEAD A CONVERSATION I HAD HAD WITH MY MOM THAT AFTERNOON...



I DECIDED TO PUT THE MASK BACK ON...

THERE WAS A SMALL PARTY GOING ON AND I NOTICED THAT MY SIXTH GRADE SCIENCE TEACHER WAS THERE. THIS WASN'T ALL THAT REMARKABLE, BUT COMING AT THAT MOMENT I TOOK IT AS A "SIGN". HE WAS STARING AT ME AND I WONDERED IF HE MIGHT NOT BE SOME KIND OF FRUIT...



BUYED BY THE TIMELY ADVENT OF SYNCHRONICITY I TOOK TO THE STREETS, AN ANXIOUS PAIN IN THE HAND OF FORTUNE. I FOUND MYSELF ENTERING THE LOBBY OF AN OLD APARTMENT BUILDING (DIRECTLY VIOLATING HALLOWEEN CONVENTION).



WHEN I GAINED THE OLD WOMAN WHO ANSWERED THE DOOR I WAS GLAD THAT I HAD AT LEAST TAKEN OFF MY MASK. I WAS SOMEHOW UNABLE TO SAY "TRICK OR TREAT" SO I HELD OUT THE BAG WITH AN EXAGERATED EXPRESSION OF HUNGER AND NEED.

OH MY GOODNESS! I FORGOT ALL ABOUT HALLOWEEN!



THE OLD WOMAN PUMBULED AROUND FOR A LONG TIME. I HEARD A SQUEAKY CUPBOARD OPEN FOLLOWED BY AN AVALANCHE OF EMPTY FOOD CONTAINERS. SHE EMERGED WITH A SUSPECT PLATE OF WAFERS (I WOULD EAT THEM ALL) AND A BOX.

THE CHILDREN DOWNSTAIRS USED TO LOVE TO COME OVER AND PLAY WITH THIS!



I WALKED THE LENGTH OF THE GROUND FLOOR BUT NOTHING "FELT RIGHT." ON MY WAY UP TO THE SECOND FLOOR I RESOLVED TO KNOCK ON THE FIRST DOOR I GAINED IN ORDER TO PRESERVE THE HARMONY OF THIS FADING REVERIE ...



SHE TOLD ME TO WAIT WHILE SHE LOOKED IN THE KITCHEN. NOW THAT I'M A FEW YEARS OLDER I WOULD KNOW TO DECLINE GRACIOUSLY AND LEAVE, BUT BACK THEN I WAS UNCLEAR ON ANY SORT OF SOCIAL PROTOCOL. MY MOTHER DID A VERY BAD JOB OF RAISING ME.

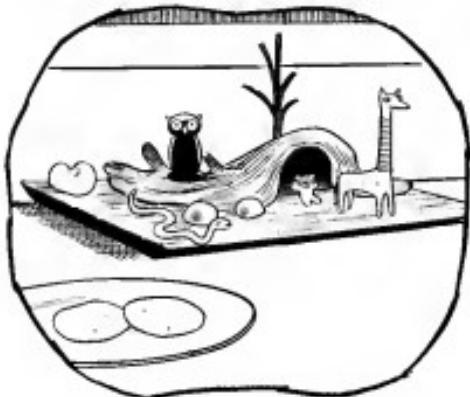


IT WAS A WOOD PUZZLE, POSSIBLY HOMEMADE, 1 OF THE UNITED STATES.

THOSE KIDS WOULDN'T CELEBRATE ANYTHING LIKE HALLOWEEN -- THEY WERE VERY RELIGIOUS!



WITH THAT, SHE BEGAN A MONOLOGUE ABOUT THE VARIOUS RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD. I BECAME ENRaptured BY A STRANGE CRECHE-LIKE CENTERPIECE AND MISSED ALL BUT THE TAIL END...



INSTEAD OF CULMINATING IN A REPUDIATION OF ALL NON-CHRISTIAN BELIEFS, SHE EVEN-HANDEDLY RECAPITULATED THE MAJOR RELIGIONS AND HELD THAT WHILE EACH HAD ITS MERITS, NONE WAS REALLY WORTH A DAMN.



SHE ASKED ME MY APARTMENT NUMBER AND I TOLD HER I DIDN'T LIVE IN THIS BUILDING...



CLEARLY THIS WAS THE OLD MAN'S SUBJECT AND SHE OBEDIENTLY DEFERRED TO HIM, SHAKING HER HEAD IN SAD ALLIANCE.



"THIS PUZZLE IS MISSING SOME OF ITS PIECES," SHE SAID. I DECIDED I'D BETTER LEAVE.



ABOUT A YEAR AND A HALF LATER I WENT TO SEE THEM BUT THEY WERE NO LONGER LIVING THERE - THE SAME TABLE WAS THERE, COVERED WITH PAPERS, BUT THE CENTERPIECE WAS LONG GONE.



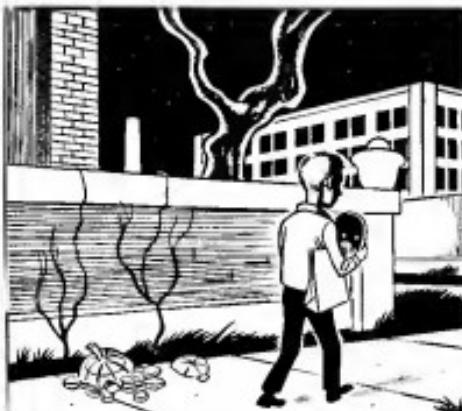
BACK OUTSIDE THERE WAS A RESURGENCE OF ACTIVITY. I WOULD BE HOODLUMS PERFORMED ACTS OF LOW-RISK VANDALISM. EVERYWHERE WERE THE LEAVINGS OF SPURIOUS DESTRUCTION, WHICH BROUGHT OUT MY PURISTS INDIGNANCE...



THE LITTLE GIRL WAS HONESTLY AND IT WAS CERTAIN THAT AROUND OTHER CHILDREN SHE WAS TIMID AND WITHDRAWN. BUT HERE SHE WAS, WALKING HOME IN HER COSTUME, A PRINCESS HOLDING THE HAND OF HER PERFECT MOTHER...



A FEW MINUTES LATER I WAS ALONE AGAIN, WIPE OUT THE INSIDE OF MY MASK WITH MY SHIRT AND TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHERE TO GO NEXT...



I WANTED TO BE THE ONLY ONE ON THE STREET AGAIN... BEHIND ME, A GIRL IN A HOME MADE PRINCESS OUTFIT AND HER MOTHER WERE HEADED NORTH...



ALL OF A SUDDEN I JUST STARTED BAWLING; IT WAS SUCH A BEAUTIFUL THING... LIKE I SAID, I WAS IN A WEIRD MOOD.



PERHAPS WHAT I REALLY WANTED, I BEGAN TO THINK, WAS A STRONGER SENSE OF FELLOWSHIP... I THOUGHT ABOUT MY FRIENDS AND ABOUT HOW I DIDN'T HAVE ANY...



MAYBE A TRULY "SPIRITUAL" FRIENDSHIP (WHATEVER THAT IS) IS ONE THAT'S ENTIRELY NON-SEXUAL AND THEREFORE OUTSIDE THE INFLUENCE OF OUR ANIMAL NATURE ...



A THAT MOMENT, I REMEMBER THINKING WISTFULLY ABOUT A BYGONE ERA, WHERE MEN AND FRIENDSHIPS WERE HONORABLE. I BECAME SO FIXATED ON THIS THOUGHT THAT I WAS ONLY PARTIALLY AWARE OF THE ALCOHOLIC SERMON (ON THE SUBJECT OF "TODAY'S CHILD") BEING DELIVERED BEFORE ME ...



B BEFORE LEAVING THE PROPERTY, I URINATED ON HIS MAILBOX, AIMING UPWARD...



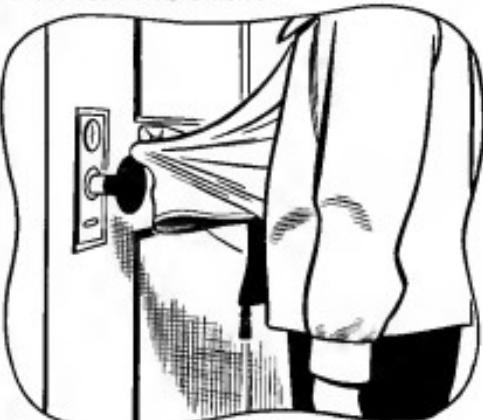
IT'S A SICK WORLD WHERE EVEN A LITTLE BOY CAN'T FIND FRIENDSHIP THAT ISN'T CONSUMED IN A SEXUAL POWER STRUGGLE !



AFTER A DRAMATIC PAUSE, HE GAVE ME THE CONTENTS OF HIS COAT POCKET: TWO BUTTERSCOTCH CANDIES AND A MINT-FLAVORED TOOTHPICK.



THEN I WENT BACK TO WIPE THE PEANUT BUTTER OFF THE OLD LADY'S DOORKNOB. AFTER THAT I DECIDED TO HEAD HOME.



ON THE WAY BACK I PASSED BY A MODEST HOME DECORATED WITH UNINTERESTING STATIONERY STORE CUT-OUTS AND DECIDED THAT MAYBE I SHOULD MAKE ONE LAST STOP JUST TO TAKE SOME OF THE "EDGE" OFF OF MY UNDERLYING MOOD...



SHE WENT IN THE OTHER ROOM FOR A LONG TIME. I CONSIDERED SPLITTING BUT BEFORE I COULD ACT, HER DAD APPEARED. HE HAD BEEN BRIEFED SO I KNEW SHE HAD ONLY PRETENDED NOT TO RECOGNIZE ME ...



HE LEFT ME ALONE WITH HIS TOY CAR. I WASN'T MUCH INTERESTED BUT I GAVE IT A TRY. AFTER ABOUT TEN SECONDS IT GOT STUCK IN THE CURTAINS.



AS SOON AS THE DOOR OPENED I SORELTY REGRETTED MY DECISION. IT WAS HEIDI ABRAMOWICZ! SHE WAS IN MY GRADE IN SCHOOL AND HAD OBVIOUSLY LONG AGO OUTGROWN HALLOWEEN...



THIS WAS TERRIBLE TO HEAR SOMEONE I HAD NEVER MET USING THE FORBIDDEN NAME. HE LEFT ME THERE AND QUICKLY REAPPEARED WITHOUT CANDY.



I COULD SEE HEIDI IN THE OTHER ROOM WATCHING A GIANTIC TV. HER DISDAIN FOR BOTH ME AND HER FATHER WAS PALPABLE. SHE WOULD GROW UP TO BECOME A LESBIAN WITH AN INTEREST IN THIRD WORLD CULTURES.



THE DAD RETURNED, AND WITH A FALSE LOOK OF REGRET TOLD ME THAT UNFORTUNATELY THEY SEEMED TO BE ALL OUT OF "TREATS"...



I MADE ONE MORE STOP. A SLEEPY BACHELOR IN A BASEMENT APARTMENT GRACIOUSLY EMPTIED THE DRESD OF HIS BOWL OF SPEARMINT GUMDROPS INTO MY BAG...



THIS WAS JUST THE SORT OF NEUTRAL CLOSING I WAS FISHING FOR AND SO WITH CONFIDENCE I CROSSED THE STREET AND HEADED NORTH, CAREFULLY RETRACING MY STEPS .



I DIDN'T EAT ANY OF THE CANDY. I REMOVED THE DOLLAR AND PUT THE BAG IN THE CLOSET, WHERE IT REMAINS, NEXT TO AN UNBROKEN PIPIA, FROM WHICH THE ABDOMINAL BOUNTY HAD BEEN CLAIMED BY HAND THROUGH A TINY HOLE .



THE GOVERNMENT NOW HAS CONTROL OVER YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION AND YOUR FINANCES... YOU ARE A SLAVE!

I HATE COMPUTERS!

YOU'RE DAZZLED BY THE PRETTY LIGHTS JUST LONG ENOUGH TO BE DROWNED BY A TIDAL WAVE OF INFORMATION WITH NO MORAL CONTEXT!

THAT'S FUCKED-UP!

THE HERO OF THIS MODERN AGE IS HE WHO MAKES THE COMPUTER HIS ENEMY

YEAH MAN!

I WANNA BE A SUPER-HERO!

IF WE START NOW WE'LL BE ABLE TO KICK ANYBODY'S ASS BY THE TIME WE'RE EIGHTEEN!

LATER...

SODOM FELDMAN NEVER LEAVES HIS HOUSE! ... WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

I DUNNO...

HEY LOOK! HERE'S HIS MAIL!

C'MON, LET'S GO!

AND...

TSK! IT'S ALL COMPUTER STUFF! HE'S LIKE OUR ARCH-ENEMY!

HIS NAME EVEN SOUNDS LIKE A SUPER VILLAIN-- FELD MAN...

WHAT'S THAT?

IT'S AN INVITATION TO SOME NERD-ASS PARTY!

LOOK! THE FILTHY CHICKEN TOOK HIS HELMET OFF!

THAT NIGHT...

I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING!

SLOW DOWN, BITCH!
LAST TIME YOU FORGOT TO MOVE THE SEAT BACK!

THAT MIGHT BE IT... HOW TOTALLY CREEPY!

THE STAKE-OUT BEGINS!

PASS ME ANOTHER BEER...

YOU CAN FINISH MINE.

Pussy!
Slut!

TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

FUCK THIS! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? YOU'RE GONNA GET US BUSTED!

I'M GOING UP THERE!

SOON...

WHAT HAPPENED?
WHAT DID YOU SAY?

I TOLD HIM I WAS A FRIEND OF FELDMAN'S AND HE SAID "FELDMAN DOESN'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS"...

AND SO...

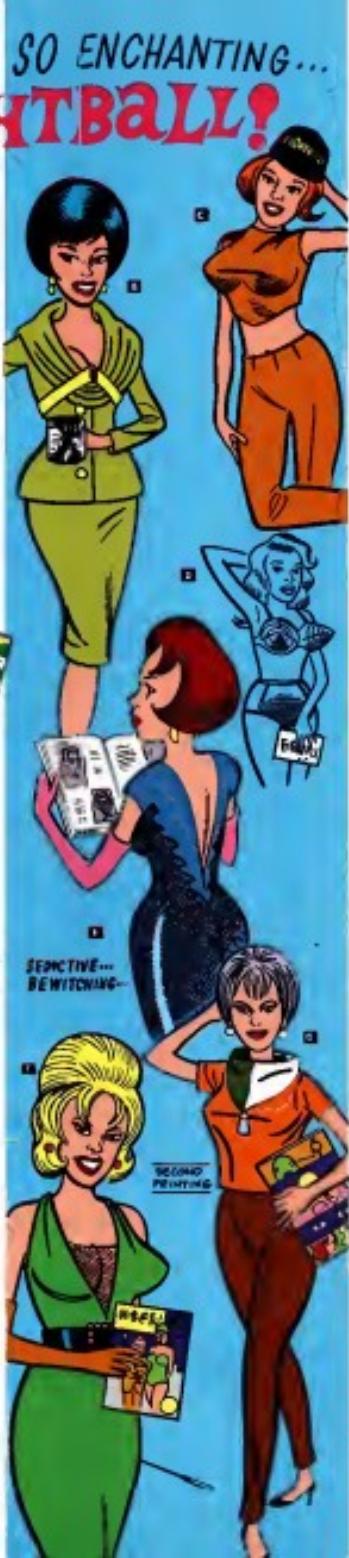
YOU'RE NOT MAKING SENSE, HOROWITZ... I HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE OF ANY SO-CALLED "PARTY"!

CLICK!

OH SHIT,
MY MOM'S HOME!

END

SO ALLURING... SO ENCHANTING...
SO **EIGHTBALL!**



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